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Nutrition literacy: A mediator of healthy-eating behavior based on the social ecological framework

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Nutrition literacy (NL) is derived from health literacy, and which is used to elaborate individuals' health literacy regarding eating behavior. However, the link between NL and healthy-eating behavior was still unknown based on available evidence. The social ecological framework has been used widely to investigate the influencing factors of healthy-eating behavior. In this study, we expected to explore the role of NL between influencing factors and healthy-eating behavior among college students based on social ecological framework. A cross-sectional and questionnaire-survey study comprising college students in Taiwan was conducted. Convenience sampling was used to select six schools: one national and one private university in each of the three regions: North, Central, and South Taiwan. Four-hundred twelve valid questionnaires were collected (effective response rate=85.8%). The questionnaire used in this study was divided into four parts: self-rated NL, influencing factors of healthy-eating behavior, healthy-eating behavior, and demographic characteristics. Descriptive statistics, an independent samples t-test, a hierarchical multiple regressions and a mediation analysis were performed for data analyses. The results showed that college students' mean NL score was 4.32 (SD=0.78, range=1-6). In the social ecological framework, NL significantly predicted healthy-eating behavior ($\Delta R^2=0.054$, $\Delta F=32.54$, $p<0.001$), controlling for background, individual, interpersonal, environmental, and social-system factors. Among the 13 predictors across the four levels predicted the healthy-eating behavior of college students, there were seven factors that were affected by the mediating effect of NL: social support from family (48.3%), healthy food proximity (43.1%) and exposure to healthy-eating advocacy (42.4%), healthy eating attitude (41.4%), social support from peers (31.0%), healthy food preference (27.3%), and healthy-eating self-efficacy (25.9%). This study suggests a prominent idea to improve NL and healthy-eating behavior at the same time. When improving the healthy-eating behavior of college students in the future, it is beneficial to develop the comprehensive intervention considering NL and multiple factors.

Biography

Li-Ling Liao has earned her PhD degree in Department of Health Promotion and Health Education, National Taiwan Normal University in 2007. She holds the position of an Associate Professor in the Department of Health Management at I-Shou University in Taiwan since 2016. Her current major areas of research are health literacy of children and adolescent. She has been the PI of college students' nutrition literacy program sponsored by the Taiwan Ministry of Technology in Taiwan since 2015. Her recent publications focus specifically on the role of nutrition literacy on college students' healthy eating behavior. She has also been the Co-PI of national health-promoting school program held by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan since 2006. She has guided many schools in Taiwan in implementation of the health-promoting school projects sponsored by the local and central governments of Taiwan.

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